

Dear TCS Families,

I am profoundly grateful to be a part of this amazing school community. Since its founding, the Country School has believed that all of us, regardless of age, must learn and be willing to keep learning. The fact that we have not only been committed to diversity and inclusion from our very beginning, but that we continually re-examine the meaning of this commitment again and again, lets me know we can always do better. Throughout our country, good people do this same work daily. Today I want to write to you about the next opportunity for progress: President Biden's nomination of Ketanji Brown Jackson as the next Supreme Court Justice.

As an educational community, we work with each other every day to challenge assumptions. We engage in equity work and ongoing professional development to strengthen our school community. The Diversity and Equity Fair showcased the kind of work we do here at TCS. Our students passionately discussed their research with our visitors, and the level of awareness and depth of understanding, as well as their confidence in presenting, let me know that, with these students as change agents, our future is bright.

Our teachers discuss the relevance of current events with students in developmentally appropriate ways to understand how and why the significance of the topics at hand matters to them. Let's pause here with one of these essential questions. Why? Or as one of our TCS students asked me directly: "Why does it matter that this will be our first Black woman on the Supreme Court?"

From a child's perspective, it's a seemingly simple question. However, the answer is both complex and illogical. The answer is in the numbers. The Supreme Court has existed for 233 years, with 115 sitting justices. Only five of those have been women, and only three people of color. The overwhelming majority of justices have been white men.

For women and people of color, representation on the court has been rare and all too slow, and for Black women, nonexistent. Judge Jackson's nomination is one step towards fulfilling the promise of America for all Americans for the first time. "Among my many blessings, and indeed the very first," she said, "is the fact that I was born in this great country. The United States of America is the greatest beacon of hope and democracy the world has ever known."

In this announcement nominating Judge Jackson, President Biden said, "For too long, our government, our courts haven't looked like America. I believe it's time that we have a court that reflects the full talents and greatness of our nation with a nominee of extraordinary qualifications, and that we inspire all young people to believe that they can one day serve their country at the highest level." It is time for the principles of justice in the highest court of the land to apply to all people equally.

Representation matters. This is not just a sound bite or a theme for Black History Month. It is the only path forward for our nation, which is projected to be minority white by 2045, according to the Brookings Institution. Los Angeles' racial and ethnic diversity right now is closer to minority white than any other major metropolitan city, and it is far past time for the children of our city to see themselves reflected in their city, state, and national elected leaders, and in proportion to their numbers.

Our nation is, and has always been, diverse in every way. It is time to embrace that rich complexity. For those of us who regularly benefit from white privilege, it is time to step out of the spotlight and fall into step with all of our neighbors. The nomination of Ketanji Brown Jackson is yet another historic first, and for that reason, symbolically essential. So let's return to our question: Why does the first Black woman on the Supreme Court matter? Because then, and only then, can there be a next Black woman.

We need to move past the era of "firsts" and into the era of "nexts." Our TCS girls of color need to know that the first Black female justice is not an anomaly, but a new normal. Our TCS boys of color need to know that there will be a next Black, Hispanic, Asian, or LGBTQ+ president. One day, the race or gender of an elected official will become unremarkable, and what a miraculous day that will be. Until then, we must celebrate the firsts, and remember how very much they matter.

All my best,

